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Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2017

Summary

The present report provides an overview of inter-agency cooperation within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in 2017. The report highlights the key activities of the Chief Executives Board in fostering a coherent approach to policy, management and operational matters so as to enhance United Nations system-wide coordination in support of intergovernmental mandates.

In 2017, CEB strengthened the collective capacities of United Nations system entities to support Member States in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through joint efforts in the area of risk and resilience and a common approach on the part of the leadership of the United Nations system. Through its High-level Committee on Programmes, the Board emphasized the ever-advancing contribution of scientific and technological innovations to sustainable development. Through its High-level Committee on Management, it focused on administrative and management issues with system-wide implications in the areas of human resources and information, finance and budget, information and communications technologies and procurement. Seeking to increase the effectiveness and impact of operational activities of the United Nations system, CEB, through the United Nations Development Group, reviewed its operational support role and continued to mainstream and accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to support the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The report also highlights coordination activities between CEB and other jointly financed bodies.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008 (LX), the present report provides an overview of the annual work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). It also responds to the request by the General Assembly, in paragraph 4 (b) of its resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence, to include appropriate information on the work of the Board in its annual overview report to the Economic and Social Council, which is also studied by the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The present report covers the year 2017.

2. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/9, took note of the annual overview report of CEB for 2016 (E/2017/55), as recommended by the Committee for Programme and Coordination in its report on the work of its fifty-seventh session (see A/72/16, chap. III.A). The present report highlights major activities carried out in 2017 under the auspices of CEB. As a coordinating body, CEB and its subsidiary mechanisms, the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group, foster policy, management and operational coherence to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations system activities. The Board's activities conform to intergovernmental mandates and support the priorities of Member States.

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 70/1, emphasized the role of the United Nations system in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see General Assembly resolution 70/1), and noted the comparative advantage of an adequately resourced, relevant, coherent, efficient and effective system. The present report illustrates how, throughout 2017, CEB and its subsidiary bodies focused their efforts on supporting the implementation of the new global agenda.

4. With the assumption of his position in January 2017, the Secretary-General called for the revitalization of the United Nations system as the cornerstone of effective multilateralism and an instrument well adapted to confront global challenges and generate collective action. In that regard, CEB and its subsidiary bodies played a central role in bringing the entities of the United Nations system closer together in recognition of their interconnectedness and in pursuit of shared goals. Under the leadership of the Secretary-General as Chair of CEB, the Board engaged in a review to ensure that it was well positioned to provide forward-looking leadership and serve as a driver of integration and coherence to support action and mandate implementation across the system in support of Member States (see A/72/124-E/2018/3, para. 91). System-wide policy coherence and coordination on programmatic and management matters continued to be the responsibility of the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, respectively, with the United Nations Development Group essentially fulfilling an operational support role at the country level. Seeking to preserve its chief responsibility of providing high-level system-wide strategic guidance while leaving questions of operations and implementation to other bodies, in November 2017 the Board agreed to separate the system-wide programmatic and management policy roles (High-level Committee on Programmes and High-level Committee on Management) from operational support (United Nations Development Group), with the Group being outside the architecture of CEB (see CEB/2017/2).

5. Transparency and accountability remained key priorities for CEB. In 2017, the Board continued its practices of actively engaging in substantive exchanges with Member States through formal and informal dialogues and further enhancing the

information provided on its website.[1] The Board also continued to coordinate with other jointly financed bodies, in particular the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the Joint Inspection Unit, as well as the Board of Auditors.

II. Strengthening policy coherence and coordination in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

6. Responding to General Assembly resolution 70/8, in which the Assembly emphasized the key role played by CEB in ensuring coordinated United Nations system-wide support in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Board continued to give priority attention to that issue, with a particular focus in 2017 on the contribution of technological innovations to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, joint efforts in the area of risk and resilience, and a common approach on the part of the leadership of the United Nations system.

7. The importance of scientific and technological innovation in meeting many sustainable development challenges and accelerating human progress is widely noted throughout the 2030 Agenda (see resolution 70/1, para. 15). At the same time, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/242, recognized that the pace and scope of rapid technological change could have far-reaching implications, both positive and negative, for the achievement of sustainable development, requiring international and multi-stakeholder cooperation in order to benefit from opportunities and address challenges.

8. CEB, at its second regular session of 2017, addressed the issue of scientific and technological innovations ("frontier" technologies) that potentially have a major impact on the social, economic and environmental spheres. Informed by analyses undertaken by the High-level Committee on Programmes, the Board examined the risks and opportunities for sustainable development associated with technological advances, with a focus on artificial intelligence, cyberspace, biotechnology and the peace and security implications of emerging technologies in order to identify appropriate areas and modalities for engagement by the United Nations system on frontier technologies in support of Member States.

9. The Board noted some shared characteristics of frontier technologies, including their rapid advancement, their transformative yet disruptive potential, their ethical and human rights implications and an absence of adequate normative and regulatory frameworks to guide their ethical development and use. Recognizing the cross-cutting and interlinked nature of frontier technologies, the Board concluded that an integrated multidisciplinary approach was required, demanding United Nations system-wide engagement based on strategic coherence, common positioning and coordinated action across all pillars of United Nations work. In particular, the Board stressed that minimizing the risks and harnessing the benefits of innovative technologies were essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and needed to be integrated across United Nations efforts to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations system had an important role to play in supporting Member States in that regard, and several United Nations system organizations were already actively doing so within their existing mandates and areas of expertise. In addition, technological innovations, when applied to business processes, had the potential to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programme delivery. CEB agreed to further explore areas for United Nation system engagement

[1] www.unsceb.org.

on frontier technologies that included both external engagement on and the internal application of new technologies.

10. Under the auspices of the High-Level Committee on Programmes, analytical work on the challenges and opportunities posed by emerging technologies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will be intensified in 2018, with a particular focus on the socioeconomic implications of new technologies. Building on its work in 2017, the Committee will continue to examine the impact of new technologies on such critical areas as labour markets, food security and education and learning. The aim of these efforts is to develop a shared understanding and shared knowledge of the complex challenges posed by new technologies and their potential for advancing human progress and sustainable development, on the basis of which system-wide efforts could potentially be developed, as appropriate, to scale up United Nations system efforts in support of the 2030 Agenda.

11. The 2030 Agenda provides an integrated framework for action aimed at markedly improving the lives of the world's people, protecting the Earth's natural resources and fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies. This fundamental shift in development cooperation has challenged the United Nations system to develop new tools and ways of working to better respond to the demands of an integrated agenda, including in the context of CEB. In 2017, the High-level Committee on Programmes put forward two key products for endorsement by CEB: an analytical framework on risk and resilience and a United Nations system leadership framework.

12. Both the General Assembly, in its resolution 70/262, and the Security Council, in its resolution 2282 (2016), expressly recognized that development, peace and security, and human rights were interlinked and mutually reinforcing, and that an integrated and coherent approach among relevant actors was critical to sustaining peace, improving respect for human rights and advancing development. CEB endorsed an analytical framework on risk and resilience (see CEB/2017/6, annex III) at its second regular session of 2017, developed through a rigorous consultative process by a task team of the High-level Committee on Programmes, led by the World Food Programme (WFP), with the participation of 25 United Nations system entities.

13. The analytical framework presents a proactive, risk-informed and prevention-centred approach to United Nations system efforts in support of the 2030 Agenda that promotes coherent and coordinated system-wide engagement. It seeks to advance a harmonized understanding and application of the concepts of risk and resilience across sustainable development, humanitarian, peace and security and human rights efforts of the United Nations system, as a basis for promoting coherent and holistic analysis and joint planning.

14. At the core of the framework are three elements: (a) systems thinking; (b) the risk and resilience equation; and (c) a prevention "lens". Those elements can be combined to form a coordinated approach to addressing threats that could set back progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Systems thinking can be used to describe the fundamental relationships among risks and other sustainable development issues at multiple levels, while a risk and resilience equation is useful for organizing efforts across pillars and defining collective outcomes. Applying a prevention lens is intended to help foster a proactive approach in the implementation of measures to increase resilience and lessen risks.

15. Pairing the risk-informed, proactive approach outlined in the framework with effective efforts to support progress on the Sustainable Development Goals is expected to help maximize the impact of United Nations work at the country level. To that end, the framework is being taken forward towards country-level operationalization within the United Nations Development Group. More broadly, given its emphasis on bringing together the various United Nations pillars around

collective outcomes and its applicability to all types of threats, the framework will serve to operationalize the nexus between humanitarian affairs, development, peace and human rights and complement ongoing initiatives, such as the "New Way of Working"[2] initiative of the Agenda for Humanity and the United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action (see CEB/2017/4/Add.1). As concrete follow-up action geared towards strengthening coherence across United Nations-led frameworks and fostering their country-level implementation, operational guidelines will be prepared through existing inter-agency processes for approval by the United Nations Development Group and implementation by the United Nations country teams.

16. Another area demanding updated tools to cope with today's complex and interconnected international context is the capacity development of United Nations leadership. Responding to the request, made by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/243, that the United Nations development system align its staff capacities to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by building transformative and empowered leadership, CEB endorsed a United Nations system leadership framework at its first regular session of 2017 (CEB/2017/1, annex). The intent is to establish a common United Nations leadership culture aligned with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by providing a blueprint for building and strengthening United Nations capacity. Jointly developed by the High-Level Committee on Programmes, the High-Level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group, with facilitation by the United Nations System Staff College, the framework defines in detail the "who, what and how" of United Nations leadership.

17. The framework establishes that, in today's challenging global environment, United Nations leadership must be norm-based, principled, inclusive, accountable, multidimensional, transformational, collaborative and self-applied. Leadership behaviours should manifest themselves in support of the 2030 Agenda in four key ways, by (a) focusing on achieving impact for the people served by the United Nations, (b) driving transformational change, (c) employing systems thinking, and (d) engaging in co-creation through partnership. Notably, the framework is not merely a tool for human resources management, but also a powerful vehicle through which to foster broader cultural change against the backdrop of the Secretary-General's wide-ranging reform efforts.

18. The leadership qualities defined in the framework are intended to be embedded in all areas of work of the United Nations system, at all levels and in all functions and locations. The agreed approach to operationalization gives organizations broad flexibility to define the best entity-level implementation road map, with due regard for their own mandates, unique value offerings and specific needs. Globally, the United Nations System Staff College continues to support the adoption of the framework and the realization of its principles through training and learning events offered to the whole system. At the country level, the framework has already been integrated into the induction programme for newly appointed resident coordinators and will also be integrated into the leadership selection, development and performance initiatives of the United Nations Development Group.

19. In 2017, in addition to the system-wide work to support the implementation of the overarching 2030 Agenda, CEB continued to respond to calls by the General Assembly for system-wide coordination in the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits. Specifically, the Board, through the High-level Committee on Programmes, made concrete efforts to improve collaboration in support of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

[2] See https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/5358.

Change and also sought to enhance United Nations system-wide coherence in the implementation of the outcomes of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

20. Climate change is recognized as one of the greatest global challenges, requiring enhanced coordination and cooperation at all levels to protect the global climate for the well-being of present and future generations of humankind (see General Assembly resolution 72/219). United Nations system organizations play an important role in supporting Member States in their efforts to reduce the risks and impacts of climate change, increase countries' ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience.

21. As a contribution to the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, CEB, at its first regular session of 2017, endorsed a United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action (see CEB/2017/4/Add.1), developed by the High-level Committee on Programmes, through a consultative inter-agency process under the leadership of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. Guided by the collective commitment of the United Nations system to improving collaboration on and the delivery of support to Member States for efforts to address climate change, the strategic approach is aimed at promoting integrated action in the areas of climate change and sustainable development and fostering the coherence of United Nations work on climate change at the country level. It is underpinned by the Board's common core principles for a United Nations system-wide approach to climate action, approved by the Board at its first regular session of 2016 (see E/2017/55), and is intended to advance their operationalization.

22. The strategic approach identifies eight thematic impact areas that would benefit from improved and increased collaboration among United Nations system entities. These include normative guidance on climate change; linkages between nationally determined contributions and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; climate resilience and disaster risk reduction; science, technology, knowledge and innovation; data and observations; climate finance; climate change nexus issues; and education, advocacy and collaborative action. The strategic approach is being implemented through existing tools, initiatives and mechanisms at the global, regional and country levels in order to leverage available United Nations system expertise and prevent duplication and redundancy. In programme countries, the resident coordinator system, through its United Nations country teams, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework are pivotal to implementation.

23. Member States have repeatedly cited the imperative of supporting the most vulnerable countries, in particular the least developed countries. Beginning with its first regular session of 2013, the Board has received updates on the system-wide follow-up to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2011.[3] Regular progress reports are provided by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States through the High-level Committee on Programmes, which took note of the latest developments at its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions.

24. Those updates have been focused on system-wide efforts to enhance the overall effectiveness of United Nations system support for enhancing the flow of foreign direct investment to the least developed countries and the ability of those countries to

[3] Pursuant to many General Assembly resolutions, including, most recently, resolution 72/231.

attract such investment, as mandated in the Political Declaration of the Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020.[4] The Inter-Agency Consultative Group for Least Developed Countries, led by the Office of the High Representative, and the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, led by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), both supported a set of recommendations to help increase the coverage, scope and effectiveness of the support of the United Nations system for the promotion of investment in least developed countries. An Inter-Agency Technical Committee was formed in September 2017 to advise on the implementation of those recommendations. The Committee considered the establishment of an Internet-based tool to increase and facilitate the sharing of information on investment promotion activities; a dedicated capacity development programme for agencies promoting investment in least developed countries; an investment monitor for least developed countries to provide analysis and updates on investment trends, opportunities and challenges in those countries; and the organization of a ministerial-business executive round table on investment in least developed countries for the Sustainable Development Goals, held during World Investment Forum 2018 of UNCTAD. The High-level Committee on Programmes will continue to be engaged in the work of the Inter-Agency Technical Committee in 2018 through regular reviews and guidance on its progress.

III. Improving and innovating administrative and management functions of the United Nations system

25. In 2017, CEB, through the High-level Committee on Management, continued its efforts to promote and coordinate reforms relating to administrative and management issues of United Nations system-wide concern, with the aim of making a contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by advancing and accelerating management coordination as well as the mutual recognition and harmonization of business practices. The work of the Committee is firmly anchored in mandates arising from the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and other intergovernmental decisions.

26. Most organizations of the United Nations system are involved in efforts to reposition their strategies and workplans and align them with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and to focus on results and impact on the ground. At its thirty-fourth session, held in September 2017, the High-level Committee on Management met in a retreat format and shared experiences relating to management initiatives throughout the system, including the simplification of regulatory and policy frameworks; the decentralization and delegation of authority; the role of leadership in driving change; the leveraging of technology; accountability mechanisms; and the facilitation of support functions for integrated field offices.

27. The High-level Committee on Management supported the Secretary-General's vision of management reform, within the parameters subsequently provided by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its related report (A/72/7/Add.24) and by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/266.

28. The High-level Committee on Management explored the various approaches to decentralization adopted or envisioned in the United Nations system, with corresponding successes and challenges, and the features and the value of tools guided by compliance and accountability for results. Discussions were focused on

[4] See General Assembly resolution 70/294, para. 69, and resolution 72/231, para. 26.

how to adopt international standards for risk management, accountability and oversight in order to deliver true value to the organizations and stakeholders, promote ownership and buy-in across the organizations and avoid the creation of additional layers of bureaucracy. The Committee supported the launch of an enterprise risk management community of practice to share knowledge and best practices, and put forward further collective proposals in support of this common endeavour.

29. The ongoing work of the High-level Committee on Management task force on the duty of care in high-risk environments has produced significant results in the development of better risk management approaches, along with prevention and mitigating measures. The task force represents a new approach in the Committee's work, defined by its cross-functional composition and integrated cooperation among United Nations system technical networks and entity representation, which facilitates concurrent, rather than sequential, methods of working. As the United Nations system is asked to "stay and deliver" in increasingly challenging environments, such critical operations come with significant risks to its workforce: not only international staff, but also, and increasingly, the large number of local staff and the affiliate workforce on the ground. In recognition of these multifaceted responsibilities towards personnel in high-risk environments, the Committee decided to develop a risk management framework specific to the duty of care,[5] including a structured evaluation process with a dashboard, standards and indicators, that can provide clear information to senior management in the organizations on local hazards and how they need to be addressed. The Committee also decided that the task force would expand its work to cover staff in all environments, with a focus on enhancing guidance and strengthening actions in the functional areas of psychosocial, health and medical care, human resources administration and safety and security during the preparatory, incumbency and post-assignment phases of assignment or deployment.

30. As part of an increasing investment in the area of data, which features prominently in the High-level Committee on Management strategic plan for the period 2017–2020, the Committee endorsed a joint initiative with the United Nations Development Group to (a) move away from a data structure that had historically been mapped on data categories and data-compilation approaches developed in a pre-Sustainable Development Goals era, and (b) create a road map for a more encompassing and disaggregated United Nations "system-wide data cube" that would be compatible with the Goals (see CEB/2017/5, para. 14).

31. The High-level Committee on Management was active in the discussions on the back-office reform process for field offices and in the process aimed at the mapping of "as-is" business operations structures/current back-office functions at the country and regional levels, as called for by the Secretary-General in his report of June 2017 entitled "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all" (A/72/124-E/2018/3). The Committee will continue to work with the United Nations Development Group to devise a strategy that would see the establishment of common back offices for all United Nations country teams by 2022, as called for by the Secretary-General in his report of December 2017 entitled "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet" (A/72/683-E/2018/7).

32. Gender equality and women's empowerment have been a priority of CEB for decades. The Committee followed closely the development and the launch of the Secretary-General's United Nations system-wide strategy on gender parity.[6] Member organizations shared experiences and lessons learned with respect to strategies that

[5] See https://www.unsystem.org/content/duty-care.

[6] See https://iseek-newyork.un.org/system/files/17-00102b_gender_strategy_report_13_sept_2017.pdf.

had succeeded and challenges that had been encountered in their pursuit of gender parity and broader diversity objectives, and committed to supporting the implementation of the strategy across the system.

33. The High-level Committee on Management continued its efforts to enhance mutual recognition and harmonization in procurement. From 2013 to 2017, there was a 299 per cent increase in the number of vendors on the United Nations Global Marketplace, which reached over 148,775, of which more than 100,007 (representing 67 per cent of the total) were from developing countries or countries with economies in transition. Vendors from those countries also accounted for 58.5 per cent of total procurement volume. At the headquarters level, the 18 members of the Common Procurement Activities Group in Geneva reported an annual cost avoidance of $37.7 million for 2016, while Rome-based agencies have reviewed their collaboration modalities, generating savings through increased coordination, leveraging and economies of scale (including joint tenders, piggybacking of contracts and the reuse of other agencies' tender results). Progress is being made in Copenhagen and New York as well. A project on the common procurement of vehicles has led to the establishment of joint long-term agreements for 11 types of vehicles, covering the majority of the needs of the system. The first contract put in place has been utilized at a value of $18.1 million by the Department of Field Support of the Secretariat, the International Labour Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNDP and the World Food Programme (WFP). As this contract is 7 per cent cheaper than any other contract with the same producer in the system, the savings generated amount to $1.27 million, with the contract already having provided a full return on investment. In addition, the Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on Management completed a study to identify new high-value commodities with respect to which collaborative procurement could potentially be pursued. The implementation of the resulting recommendations will be launched in 2018. Finally, the Network agreed to jointly develop an approach to the calculation of savings arising from collaborative procurement.

34. In response to a request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/238 of 23 December 2015, a task force was established by the High-level Committee on Management in 2016 to develop a single agreed definition, across the United Nations system, of what constitutes fraud and suspected or presumptive fraud, which is essential in order to develop effective counter-fraud policies to ensure compatibility and comparability of related data across entities and to improve overall transparency. At its thirty-third session, in March 2017, the Committee adopted such common definitions of fraud and presumptive fraud. Individual organizations would be expected to operationalize the agreed common definitions within their respective regulatory frameworks, legal instruments and policies, as appropriate, according to their specific requirements and within a time frame appropriate for the circumstances of each organization.

35. In the area of finance and budget, the Finance and Budget Network of the High-level Committee on Management continued its work on the mutual recognition and harmonization of banking contracts. In 2017, an additional master banking agreement was established with Citibank, bringing the total to three, including those reached with Ecobank and Standard Chartered Bank. The master banking agreements, applying to the entire United Nations system, ensure a standardized fee structure, allow for systematic improvement in service levels and provide uniformity and simplicity in legal documentation, with United Nations privileges and immunities fully pre-negotiated and agreed. To date, a total of 26 common local banking agreements have been completed, resulting in an overall reduction of banking charges and operational risks. Thirteen more are planned for 2018.

36. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/248 B on, inter alia, managing after-service health insurance liabilities, the inter-agency Working Group on After-Service Health Insurance continued its work on studying further options for increasing efficiency and containing costs, by analysing commonalities and differences among United Nations system organizations with regard to the definition, funding and management of health plans and after-service health insurance funds and liabilities. A report of the Secretary-General on the outcome of the study (A/71/698 and A/71/698/Corr.1) was submitted to the General Assembly in December 2016. Work in this area continued in 2017, related to collective negotiations with health-care providers and third-party administrators; harmonization of the principles guiding after-service health insurance liability valuation; and analysis of the appropriateness, practicability and financial effects of opportunities for enrolment for primary coverage under national health insurance schemes. The General Assembly has requested that the Working Group on After-Service Health Insurance report back at the seventy-third session, in 2018.

37. In the area of human resources, the High-level Committee on Management, through its Human Resources Network, actively coordinated on the further implementation of the results of the comprehensive review by ICSC of the common system compensation package for staff in the Professional and higher categories (see General Assembly resolution 70/244). During 2017, the Network spent considerable effort on preparing for swift system-wide implementation of the changes, in particular with regard to the new education grant scheme. This included an active exchange on implementation practices and modalities across various enterprise resource planning user groups for various providers. The Network also participated actively in the consultations during the ensuing phase of the Commission's review, focusing on the use of staff categories, including participation in an ICSC working group on the subject.

38. The Human Resources Network also continued its exchange of experiences with regard to lessons learned and shared best practices in the area of performance management, including the management of underperformance. This included reviews of tribunal cases related to the subject matter with the aim of distilling lessons learned and identifying areas for improvement.

39. The Human Resources Network completed its feasibility study and a cost-benefit analysis for the establishment of a global centre for joint human resources services — job classification and reference checking. The High-level Committee on Management supported the plan, presented by all participating organizations, for the centre to "go live" on 1 January 2018.

40. At the second regular session of the Board, member organizations recognized that addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system deserved maximum attention and commitment on the part of the entire United Nations leadership. The Board welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a task force on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system. The task force, under the leadership of the Chair of the High-level Committee on Management, began its work late in 2017, plans to present a first progress report on its work to the Committee at its second-quarter session and is expected to complete its work by the Committee's fourth-quarter session in 2018.

41. CEB recognizes the importance of multilingualism and continued its efforts to promote and facilitate multilingualism in response to General Assembly resolutions 67/292, 69/324 and 71/328. At its thirty-third session, in March 2017, the High-level Committee on Management adopted (and CEB subsequently endorsed) the Akoma

Ntoso Extensible Markup Language (XML) standard [7] for the United Nations documentation environment.

42. As indicated in the annual overview report of CEB for 2016 (E/2017/55), the adoption of a United Nations semantic interoperability framework is expected to lead to considerable efficiencies in document management processes. It will make United Nations system documents machine-readable, and thus deliver considerable productivity gains in the translation processes by improving translation consistency and reducing costs, and helping United Nations system organizations easily reuse content and automate formatting tasks. In addition, faster multilingual search capabilities will empower users and enable them to view linked information and track various document versions. Semantic technologies are ideally suited to supporting multilingualism, as they facilitate the accurate alignment of text in various languages and the precise identification of context for use in computer-assisted translation. Another benefit is the multichannel dissemination of data, including greater access to United Nations documents for persons with disabilities.

43. Having machine-readable documents available in a common semantically rich format will also be a considerable asset for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which requires strong coordination and integration, a robust review mechanism and a solid framework for evidence-based policies and accountability. The High-level Committee on Management will now engage in the implementation of the common documentation standard across the United Nations system, in cooperation with relevant international institutions.

44. The secretariat of CEB is also supporting the Coordinator for Multilingualism in her continued efforts towards the pursuit of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to multilingualism within the United Nations system. This has included the updating by the Coordinator of a matrix of mandates and relevant recommendations of oversight and expert bodies, including those recommendations that apply to all United Nations entities; her continued engagement with the network of focal points for multilingualism and her efforts to coordinate the language days observed in the United Nations system; and the production, led by the Coordinator, with the assistance of the Department of Public Information, of a short video on multilingualism to be made available in a wide variety of languages and to be used, free of charge, by United Nations entities as part of their efforts to promote multilingualism.

45. In 2018, the CEB secretariat will support the Coordinator on Multilingualism in the development of a strategic policy framework on multilingualism, to serve as a benchmark for other United Nations entities in their efforts to raise the profile of multilingualism, and will lead the development of a dedicated platform for the exchange of information with other United Nations entities.

IV. Enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations operational activities for development

46. In 2017, the United Nations Development Group continued to place the highest priority on ensuring the coherent implementation of General Assembly resolutions 67/226 and 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. During the reporting period, the United Nations development system experienced increasing demand from Governments for support in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In response to

[7] Akoma Ntoso is now an OASIS XML standard for parliamentary, normative and judicial documents originally developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.

requests from more than 100 Member States, the Group focused on delivering coherent and integrated support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda under its common mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support approach.

47. Resident coordinators and United Nations country teams continued to support Governments in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national frameworks and budgets, in the alignment of national strategies, and in Sustainable Development Goal measurement and reporting. To that end, the United Nations Development Group updated its mainstreaming reference guide[8] on the basis of lessons learned and good practices. The updated reference guide includes new tools, and information on adapting Sustainable Development Goals to national, subnational and local contexts, as well as on financing and budgeting for the future. Furthermore, the Group launched an acceleration toolkit[9] to support progress in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals at the country level. The toolkit includes a web-based platform that provides a repository of analytical tools, such as multisectoral and cross-cutting solutions, that can assist Governments in addressing integration, the imperative to leave no one behind, and risk-informed development that tackles vulnerability and boosts resilience.

48. In response to the call of the 2030 Agenda for integrated approaches across multiple sectors and goals, the United Nation Development Group established the Joint Policy Fund to Advance the 2030 Agenda through Integrated Policy.[10] The inter-agency pooled fund was designed to accelerate progress in achieving national sustainable development goals through integrated policy support. It seeks to provide programme countries with catalytic support in response to specific complex, multidimensional policy challenges as identified by Governments.

49. The United Nations Development Group continued its efforts to strengthen system-wide coherence and collaboration in support of the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to operationalize the CEB shared United Nations system framework for action entitled "Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development,"[11] adopted by the Board at its second-quarter session in 2016.

50. Furthermore, in response to resolution 67/226, the United Nations Development Group developed and issued guidance for a new generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks[12] that are firmly aligned with national needs and priorities, grounded in solid data and analytics, and focused on results and impact. The new guidance supports the shared principle of leaving no one behind and promotes integrated approaches to programming across the development, humanitarian, human rights and sustaining peace dimensions based on joint analysis and multi-year planning frameworks. The 23 Frameworks,[13] the implementation of which began in 2017, reflect the new guidance as well as significant alignment with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

51. The United Nations Development Group continued to make progress in implementing the mandates set out in resolution 67/226 on gender equality and

[8] See https://undg.org/document/mainstreaming-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-reference-guide-for-un-country-teams/.

[9] See https://undg.org/2030-agenda/sdg-acceleration-toolkit/.

[10] See http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/IPS00.

[11] See https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf.

[12] See https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-UNDAF_Guidance_01-May-2017.pdf.

[13] For Albania, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Chad, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, the Gambia, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Peru, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Thailand, Viet Nam and the Caribbean (multi-country).

women's empowerment. Some 90 per cent of the latest generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks launched feature a gender-specific outcome, while gender equality and the empowerment of women continue to be the most frequent focus area for United Nations joint programmes. To further enhance coordinated action on gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Group updated the resources for United Nations country teams on gender mainstreaming for the development and roll-out of new Frameworks.

52. Following a global review of the gender scorecards from the period 2012–2014, the United Nations Development Group updated the scorecard tool and aligned it with the corporate United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The new gender scorecard[14] builds on self-assessment methodology to enhance ownership by United Nations country teams and facilitate a phased approach to meeting performance requirements. The scorecard was piloted in six countries[15] and was finalized in 2017. It will be rolled out globally in 2018.

53. At the regional level, the regional teams of the United Nations Development Group continued to provide strategic planning and quality assurance support to United Nations country teams for the framing of a new generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal targets of their respective countries. The regional teams engaged in policy dialogues with Member States, think tanks, civil society and other actors, and promoted regional United Nations Development Group advocacy to strengthen positioning with regard to United Nations norms and values. Coherent regional Development Group engagement supported the country-level development of Sustainable Development Goal road maps and dashboards with identified accelerators for Goal implementation.

54. In line with the statement of collaboration agreed upon by the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations regional commissions in 2016, there was deepened collaboration between the Group's regional teams and the Regional Coordination Mechanisms, including merged and joint meetings. The teams also supported the development of regional strategic frameworks linking development, humanitarian and peacebuilding action, and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks that bridged the Organization's development, humanitarian and recovery efforts in fragile contexts.

55. Informed by General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on sustaining peace, which emphasized the importance of prevention, the United Nations and the World Bank Group launched a joint global study entitled "Pathways for peace: inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict",[16] analysing the role of development in the prevention of violent conflict. The United Nations partnership with the World Bank Group was further strengthened through closer collaboration in countries affected by conflict and fragility. The United Nations and the World Bank launched the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative,[17] a joint effort providing $4.2 million for the establishment of joint platforms aligning country operations in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Pakistan, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen.

56. To support United Nations country teams in convening effective multi-stakeholder coalitions for the Sustainable Development Goals and to help deliver better programmatic results, the United Nations Development Group produced

[14] See https://undg.org/programme/gender-equality-and-empowerment-of-women/gender-scorecard.

[15] Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

[16] See http://hdl.handle.net/10986/28337.

[17] See http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/the-humanitarian-development-peace-initiative.

critical guidance on communications and advocacy. As a result of that effort, the share of country teams that have joint communications groups to coordinate and share communications resources at the country level increased to 97 per cent, while the share of country teams with joint communications strategies increased to 79 per cent.

57. To further strengthen robust monitoring of results, the United Nations Development Group continued to improve the information management system, which systematically tracks data from 130 United Nations country teams on coordination results. In its third year of implementation, the system has become a key tool for assessing progress on coherence and coordination at the country level. The Group made data more open and accessible by providing all of its member entities with access to the system and by making key sets of data public on its website.[18] In response to resolution 67/226, and as more United Nations governing boards request individual entities to monitor and report on system-wide contributions and results, open data will be a key lever of transformation going forward.

58. To strengthen the resident coordinator system and enhance system-wide leadership collaboration and accountability for delivering together, the United Nations Development Group rolled out the methodology for a new performance management system for resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. An online platform will be available in 2018 to enable resident coordinators and country teams to gather 360-degree peer feedback. In response to resolution 67/226, and to ensure that resident coordinators have the stable and predictable resources that they need to fulfil their mandates effectively, the Group continued the implementation of the global system-wide cost-sharing arrangement in support of the resident coordinator system.

59. As part of the commitment of the Secretary-General to more effective delivery by the United Nations development system on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Development Group was taken out of the CEB architecture and reconstituted under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General, with the objective of increasing its ability to steer and provide greater strategic direction, oversight and accountability to the collective contribution of the United Nations system to the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General has also decided to rename the United Nations Development Group as the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to reflect the comprehensive, integrated nature and the scale of ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

V. Sustaining compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards

60. Following the decision of the High-level Committee on Management on the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) by the United Nations system in 2005 and the establishment of a jointly funded system-wide project in that regard in 2006 (see CEB/2006/3), all 24 organizations that have completed their implementation of IPSAS continue to receive unqualified audit opinions. The results attest to the capability of the United Nations system to sustain compliance with IPSAS, which continues to evolve through changes made to the standards on a regular basis, in order to improve the quality of financial reporting and enhance transparency and accountability.

61. The key activities of the Task Force on Accounting Standards are focused on sustaining IPSAS compliance and the realization of the planned benefits of IPSAS,

[18] https://ims.undg.org/.

including greater comparability of financial reporting policies and practices across the United Nations system.

62. One of the key contributing factors with respect to sustaining IPSAS compliance in 2017 was the ongoing engagement by the Task Force with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board, which continues to update standards and issue guidance in response to user needs and changing environments. Monitoring the work of the IPSAS Board, keeping updated on new pronouncements and upcoming projects, and providing feedback to the IPSAS Board on behalf of the United Nations system are among the key activities of the Task Force. In 2017, the Task Force reviewed consultation papers and exposure drafts issued by the IPSAS Board in the areas of financial reporting for heritage in the public sector, accounting for revenue and non-exchange transactions and financial instruments. The Task Force also concluded its work on the standardization of the after-service health insurance liability valuation methodology and the key liability valuation factors.

63. The system-wide IPSAS project resource continues to support the Task Force on Accounting Standards by facilitating its meetings and communications with high-level committees and external auditors, actively monitoring the activities of the IPSAS Board, coordinating the diverse range of IPSAS-compliant financial reporting and providing guidance and support in areas of special interest identified by the Task Force.

VI. Improving transparency and accountability

64. The enhancement of the transparency and accountability of the activities of CEB and a continuous direct and substantive dialogue between it and Member States, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolutions 64/289 and 69/17, remained a priority for the Board in 2017. To facilitate engagement with Member States, briefings and dialogues were organized throughout the reporting period. During the operational activities for development segment of the 2018 session of the Economic and Social Council, held at the beginning of March, the Chair of the United Nations Development Group briefed Member States on the governance and coordination of the United Nations development system. Also in the context of the segment, the Vice-Chair of the High-level Committee on Management engaged with Member States on the creation of a common back office to function as a system. In June, the Acting Secretary of CEB formally briefed the Council on the work undertaken by the Board and its sub-mechanisms in 2016 and updated the Council on the Board's activities in 2017. Also in June, the Acting Secretary, as mandated, presented the main activities of the Board to the Committee for Programme and Coordination, to which it also introduced its strategic framework for the biennium 2018–2019.

65. In the area of data, the annual publication of system-wide financial and human resources data on the Board's website continued in 2017. During the period, a new data management platform was introduced for improved data-gathering and to meet the reporting needs of the CEB secretariat. The process of data submission and validation now provides for more confidence in the quality of the data collected. Further releases, which will introduce data analysis functionality as well as data visualizations for the wider public, are planned for 2018.

66. In addition, the CEB secretariat continued to collaborate with the United Nations Children's Fund and WFP on the second phase of the United Nations Data Innovation Lab web platform.[19] The platform provides an overview of the Data

[19] See https://data-innovation.unsystem.org/.

Innovation Lab workshop series and facilitates the sharing of knowledge on data projects from the workshops.

67. Furthermore, the United Nations System Data Catalog, available to the public,[20] presents a single point of access to data, spanning the spectrum of organization mandates. The platform continues to grow on the basis of metadata collected from United Nations system organization data sets, which so far represents more than 3,000 data sets covering more than 50 thematic areas.

VII. Coordination between the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and other jointly financed bodies

68. CEB, through its subsidiary bodies, continued to contribute to the programme of work of both ICSC and the Joint Inspection Unit.

69. The Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management also continued its long history of participation in the sessions and working groups of ICSC and the meetings of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions.

70. In addition to participating in the collaborative work on the implementation of the United Nations common system compensation package, outlined in section IV above, the Human Resources Network, through its field group, also closely collaborated with the Commission on such matters as the review of hardship classifications and other field-based entitlements.

71. In 2017, CEB and the Joint Inspection Unit continued its long-standing collaboration and dialogue, mainly through consultations during both the preparation of the terms of reference for the Unit's reports and during the preparation of the reports themselves. The Unit consulted with the CEB secretariat on the terms of reference for its planned report on the review of donor reporting requirements across the United Nations system and during the preparation of its report entitled "Review of air travel policies in the United Nations system: achieving efficiency gains and cost savings and enhancing harmonization" (JIU/REP/2017/3). Furthermore, in the context of the discussion at its thirty-third session on new service delivery approaches, the High-level Committee on Management received a briefing by the Chair of the Unit on the findings contained in his report entitled "Administrative support services: the role of service centres in redesigning administrative service delivery" (JIU/REP/2016/11).

72. Also in 2017, CEB, through the Finance and Budget Network of the High-level Committee on Management, continued its engagement with the Board of Auditors and the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations, the Specialized Agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, including through the participation of the Panel in a meeting of the Network regarding developments in the area of external audit.

VIII. Conclusions

73. Over the course of 2017, CEB systematically contributed to efforts by the United Nations system to enhance coordination and coherence across a range of programmatic, management and operational issues in support of intergovernmental mandates and priorities. As challenges facing the international community continued

[20] See http://www.undatacatalog.org/.

to grow in complexity, the United Nations system sought to support Member States by strengthening policy coherence and coordination in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promoting system-wide preparation for and follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits, enhancing the effectiveness and impact of United Nations operational activities for development and improving and innovating the administrative and management functions of the United Nations system.